

A NOTE ON THE DUMBARTON OAKS *TETHYS* MOSAIC

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Standing at the entrance to the Music Room at Dumbarton Oaks, one looks out on the pool in the courtyard paved with a mosaic depicting the bust of a woman surrounded by fish (Fig. 1). The serenity and beauty of the woman, the excellent execution of the mosaic, its large size, and good state of preservation—all contribute to make this Late Antique pavement one of the major works in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection. In addition, it is of importance for classical iconography, for it is one of the few images of the Greek sea goddess Tethys identified by an inscription.¹

Since the 1940s, when the original excavation reports and Doro Levi's *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* were published, virtually nothing has been written about the *Tethys* mosaic, largely because it was kept in storage until it was installed at Dumbarton Oaks in 1968.² The purpose of this note is to supplement these early brief reports.

The *Tethys* mosaic was found within the city of

I would like to acknowledge with gratitude the generous support given me in the preparation of this report by Professor Marie Spiro of the University of Maryland. I also wish to thank Sue Boyd, Curator of the Byzantine Collection, and Carol Moon, Assistant Curator, for facilitating my study of the Dumbarton Oaks *Tethys* mosaic in various ways. The staff of Dumbarton Oaks has been unfailingly helpful, especially Jelisaveta Allen, Dina Giambi, Joan Aston, and Claudia Vess. I am indebted as well to Dr. Sheila Campbell and Professor James Russell for their advice and to Professor Dr. Ludwig Budde and Professor Jean Charles Balty for permission to reproduce their photographs. Above all, I owe special thanks to my husband for his continuing encouragement and assistance.

¹ The only other image of Tethys with an identifying inscription known to me is the one on the early sixth-century B.C. black figure Attic vase decorated by Sophilos and now in the British Museum. In the upper register of the bowl Tethys accompanies her husband, Okeanos, in a procession of the gods to the house of Peleus to celebrate his marriage to Thetis. Dyfri Williams, "Sophilos in the British Museum," *Greek Vases in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Occasional Papers on Antiquities* 1 (1983), 29, 31–32, figs. 19, 34. I am indebted to Professor Marjorie Venit of the University of Maryland for this reference.

² *Bulletin*, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University (June 1939), 13–14, fig. 2.

Antioch in an extensive building complex designated "Bath F" by the excavators.³ The pool that it decorated belonged to the second of four building phases identified in the excavations. The site was first occupied by a rectangular pool paved with plain white mosaic. In the second phase an irregular octagonal pool with the *Tethys* mosaic at its center was built within the rectangular basin. In the third phase an apsidal wall was installed within the octagonal pool around the *Tethys* mosaic. In the fourth and final phase the basin, mosaic, and apsidal wall were all covered by the new floor of a building identified by a tessellated inscription as a public bath "rebuilt from the foundations" in A.D. 537/38.⁴ On the basis of this inscription it seems probable that the earlier building on the site, to which the *Tethys* mosaic belonged, was also a public bath.

The mosaic is framed by a simple polychrome band. The composition can be described as multi-directional because the fish are arranged around the central bust of Tethys in a loose spiral in which some of them can be seen in profile view from every side of the octagon. Tethys is depicted rising bare-shouldered from the sea, with a golden rudder resting at an angle against her right shoulder. A strong robust woman with the regular features and straight nose of the classical tradition, she inclines her head to the right with a pensive air. Her dark hair, parted in the middle, falls in waves to her shoulders, and gray wings sprout from her fore-

Antioch on the Orontes. III: The Excavations, 1937–1939 (Princeton, 1941) (hereafter *Antioch*), 9, 172–73 no. 105, plan II, pl. 48. Doro Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* (Princeton, 1947) (hereafter *Levi*), I, 258–59, 568, 601–2; II, pls. 62a, 163a. Frances F. Jones, "Antioch Mosaics in Princeton. Appendix: Mosaics from Antioch in Other American Institutions," *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 40.2 (1981) (hereafter *Jones*), 24 no. M160 A–F. Vladimiro Dorigo, *Late Roman Painting* (London, 1971) (hereafter *Dorigo*), 193–94, fig. 153.

³ Bath F was located in Section 13–R of the excavations. See *Levi*, II, plan I.

⁴ The Greek text, translation, and commentary are given in *Levi*, I, 366.

head. To the left of the rudder is an inscription:

TH/ΘΥC . Beneath Tethys' bust the sea is rendered in horizontal bands of shades of gray. Twenty-four fish of eight different varieties are represented on the surrounding white ground. While the dolphin, cuttlefish, and red surmulletts are recognizable, neither they nor the five other varieties are accurate portrayals of actual species of fish.⁵

The quality of this figural composition is evident in its accomplished execution. The tesserae (1 to 1.5 cm long) are closely set with a density ranging from forty-three tesserae to seventy-nine in a ten-centimeter square. Furthermore, an abundant variety of colored tesserae are used: limestone in white and in a range of shades of yellow, gold, tan, beige, gray-brown, rose, maroon; marble in black and white and in shades of pink, rose, red, and gray; glass in yellow, orange, red, deep red, violet, blue, turquoise, green, and black.

The Dumbarton Oaks *Tethys* mosaic, depicting a marine goddess with wings sprouting from her forehead, is one of a group of mosaics representing other versions of this image.⁶ With one exception,⁷ all these mosaics have been found in the Greek East, often in baths or adjacent to pools. Most have been excavated in Antioch and its suburbs, but some have been found to the north in Alexandretta and Cilicia, to the south in Syria, and as far east as Garni in Armenia. Apparently, the winged sea goddess composition was a favorite subject in the Antioch area for the decoration of baths and, in effect, a local equivalent of the marine thiasos of Poseidon, a favorite subject for the decoration of baths in the Latin West. The dates of the winged sea goddess group of mosaics range from the second century to the fifth. In the following discussion it will be seen that the Dumbarton Oaks mosaic occupies a position in the latter part of the stylistic and iconographic development of this group. This position

⁵Personal interview, Dr. Victor G. Springer, Curator, Division of Fishes, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, 1 December 1983. Letter, Dr. Eugenie Clark, Department of Zoology, University of Maryland, 2 December 1983. Both Dr. Springer and Dr. Clark concur that the fish in the Dumbarton Oaks mosaic are only distantly related to real species. Dr. Springer tentatively suggested that, in addition to the dolphin, cuttlefish, and surmullet, four other types of fish in the mosaic may have been remotely inspired by sturgeon, jack, cod, and swordfish. The eighth type was too generalized to be identified. A plan with the location of each type is on file with the Curator, Dumbarton Oaks, along with a detailed catalogue description of the mosaic.

⁶See Appendix below.

⁷The one at Venosa, Italy, A.D. 300–350. See Appendix below, esp. Fabbricotti, "Tethys," 211, 218.

lends support to Doro Levi's dating of the mosaic to the second quarter of the fourth century.⁸

The earliest sea goddess mosaic is the one excavated in the House of the Calendar in Antioch, dated by archeological evidence to a period shortly after the earthquake of A.D. 115 (Fig. 2).⁹ The style of this mosaic belongs to the tradition of Greco-Roman naturalistic classicism.¹⁰ It depicts a semi-nude god and goddess reclining on opposite sides of a blue-green sea filled with fish who dart about at random, casting shadows below them, sometimes overlapping each other. The fish are portrayed with such realism that they have been identified by species.¹¹ Light is an important element in creating the naturalism of the scene, above all in integrating the figures and fish with their environment. A single source of strong light on the left plays across the figures and accentuates the variations in surface of flesh, hair, and scale. The shadows, on the other hand, serve to establish the three-dimensionality of both the figures and the watery deep surrounding them.

The Dumbarton Oaks mosaic is more closely related to another Antioch mosaic which is one stage removed from the naturalism of the mosaic in the House of the Calendar. This mosaic, from Room Six in the House of the Boat of Psyches and now in the Baltimore Museum of Art, is dated to around the third quarter of the third century (Fig. 3).¹² Here, as in the Dumbarton Oaks mosaic, the natural relationship between the figures and their setting has disintegrated: there is no single, consistent source of light; the three-dimensional blue sea has become a two-dimensional white ground; and the fish are now schematized rather than being accurate representations of specific species. Furthermore, in the Baltimore mosaic the disappearance of light has led to the disappearance of cast shadows. In this mosaic, as well as in the Dumbarton Oaks pavement, the two full-length figures of the god and goddess have been replaced by the bust of the goddess alone. Although the goddess in the Baltimore mosaic is more delicately feminine in

⁸Levi, I, 625.

⁹See Appendix below.

¹⁰Cf. Dorigo, 56–58.

¹¹Charles Rufus Morey, *The Mosaics of Antioch* (London, 1938), 30–31.

¹²See Appendix below. Since the *Tethys* mosaic from Room Six of the House of the Boat of Psyches will be discussed frequently, for brevity's sake it will be cited as "the Baltimore goddess." That phrase will not be used here to refer to the other *Tethys* mosaic in Baltimore, the one from the triclinium of the House of the Boat of Psyches.

appearance, in other respects she is so similar to the Dumbarton Oaks sea goddess that both may derive from the same model. In both compositions the features of the goddess reflect the same classical ideal of beauty as that of the goddess of the House of the Calendar. The hair, parted in the center and falling in long waves to bare shoulders, also resembles that of the goddess of the House of the Calendar.

When the Baltimore mosaic and the Dumbarton Oaks mosaic are examined more closely, their differences emerge. In the Dumbarton Oaks mosaic an attempt has been made to impose an abstract order on the disorder of nature and to simplify its complexities. An obvious effort has also been made to create a unified decorative composition. For instance, in the Baltimore mosaic the sea creatures still swim almost as freely as those of the House of the Calendar, not only because they are foreshortened and depicted in action, but also because they have been scattered at random across the white field. Each is an isolated entity. In the Dumbarton Oaks mosaic, on the other hand, the composition has been unified by imposing an orderly arrangement on the fish, which are set in a spiral around the bust of Tethys. They cover almost all of the available field, suggesting a *horror vacui* on the part of the artist. The undulating lines of some of the fish still convey movement, but many of the fish appear as motionless as if they were dead. Within the spiral the fish are arranged so that in general the three or four fish of each variety follow each other around the spiral. Since at least one fish of each group has glass tesserae, the sparkle of the glass is distributed evenly throughout the composition. One may conclude, therefore, that in planning the composition the artist of the Dumbarton Oaks pavement was governed more by the desire to create a decorative ensemble than to imitate nature. At the same time, the casual placement of the fish in the spiral, combined with some suggestion of movement, gives a degree of naturalism to the scene.

This tendency toward regularity is also visible in the difference between the irregular lines of the eyes and eyebrows of the Baltimore goddess and the geometrically precise arcs of Tethys' eyes and eyebrows (Figs. 4 and 5). Simplification can be seen in the rendering of the hair for which at least seven different tones were used in the Baltimore mosaic but only three in the Dumbarton Oaks panel. Regularity and simplification are evident, above all, in the modeling of the flesh where the painterly approach of the Baltimore panel is replaced by a linear

one at Dumbarton Oaks. In the Baltimore mosaic, which admittedly is executed with smaller tesserae (ranging from ninety-one to two hundred fifteen tesserae in a ten-centimeter square)¹³ in a wider range of tones, the different-colored stones are intermingled irregularly creating subtle transitions from light to shadow, which, in places, are virtually imperceptible. When one compares, for instance, the modeling of the nose of the Baltimore goddess with that of the Dumbarton Oaks Tethys, one sees that in the latter, by contrast, the transitions from light to shadow are highly obvious not only because of the larger size of the tesserae, but because they are systematized into a series of uniformly colored bands. Although the head and its features retain plasticity, the result of this simplified system of modeling is that the contours appear hard and surfaces smooth and taut. Here, in contrast to the Baltimore goddess, the semblance of human flesh and bone is lost. Furthermore, while there is no consistent source of light as in the Baltimore mosaic, there are cast shadows. These, however, are abstracted into black bands hugging the bellies of the fish so that they are virtually unrecognizable as shadows.

When the Dumbarton Oaks mosaic is compared to the sea goddess mosaic of the Yakto complex (Fig. 6),¹⁴ dated to the third quarter of the fifth century, one finds that in the later mosaic the tendency toward decorative abstraction has been carried considerably further. The heightened linear technique accentuates the outlines of the eyes and face and the undifferentiated flatness of the surfaces enclosed by these lines. The near frontality of the head permits the artist to simplify the contour of the left cheek to one long sweeping curve. The eyes are rendered as geometrically perfect ellipses, while the hair streams out in flat ribbons from both sides of the head in an abstract pattern. In contrast to the head of the Dumbarton Oaks Tethys, which is convincingly three-dimensional, the Yakto head is flat. Furthermore, unlike the Dumbarton Oaks Tethys, all human feeling is gone from the vacantly staring eyes of the Yakto goddess. Rather than being represented as isolated images on a white ground, the sea goddess and her subjects are here once again integrated with a continuous seascape. The sea, rendered as a green band, serves as the background for a rhythmic procession of rubbery dolphins and energetic erotes, symmetrically flanking

¹³ Levi, I, 633.

¹⁴ See Appendix below.

the goddess. In this composition, however, the artist has taken a step beyond the mosaicist of the Dumbarton Oaks pavement in employing the subjects of the scene as ornamental elements, for, not only are the dolphins and erotes decoratively arranged, but the sea itself is bent incongruously at right angles so that it functions as a framing device on the three remaining sides of the panel.¹⁵ The result is that in the upper border the dolphins and erotes appear upside down in relation to the goddess. This abstract and decorative scene is far indeed from the naturalistic representation of classical deities at ease in their watery kingdom in the House of the Calendar composition.

Thus it can be seen that in the stylistic evolution from the classical naturalism of the House of the Calendar mosaic to the decorative abstraction of the Yako mosaic the Dumbarton Oaks mosaic holds an intermediate position. The Dumbarton Oaks *Tethys* represents an advanced stage in the process in which complex, natural images, like the Baltimore goddess, were simplified into visual formulas which would eventually result in schematized decorative images like the Yako goddess. As noted above, this location in the stylistic evolution of the Antioch sea goddess group provides support for Levi's dating of the mosaic to the second quarter of the fourth century.

Additional support for this dating is provided by the *Tethys* mosaic excavated at Shahba, Syria,¹⁶ which is the closest stylistically to the Dumbarton Oaks pavement of all the sea goddess mosaics (Fig. 7). The treatment of the Cupid's-bow lips and the modeling of the chin of the goddess are virtually identical in the two mosaics. Both share the stylistic tendency toward abstraction, which, however, is seen more clearly in the Shahba pavement in the erotes of the surrounding frame than in the central bust, although the Shahba sea goddess does possess something of the hardness of contour and the smoothness of facial surface of the Dumbarton Oaks bust. A more striking similarity is the androgynous character of both goddesses. In the Shahba mosaic the face could be that of either a man or a woman, while in the Dumbarton Oaks pavement the face of a woman is combined with the powerful neck of a man.¹⁷ Finally, both faces have the straight noses and regular features of the classical ideal of beauty. It is largely because the Shahba mosaic combines this classicism with a stylistic tendency toward ab-

straction that Janine Balty dates this mosaic to the second quarter of the fourth century.¹⁸

The fact that the same combination is found in the Dumbarton Oaks mosaic is a strong reason for assigning it to the same period. While, taken broadly, Late Antique art evolved from a classical naturalism like that of the House of the Calendar to a decorative abstraction like that of the mosaic of the Yako complex, it would be simplifying history to infer that this evolution was a constant and consistent process. In fact, the stylistic tendency toward abstraction reached a peak in the anticlassical style which appeared in the first quarter of the fourth century under the Tetrarchs and continued under Constantine. Possibly as a reaction to the Tetrarch style, another style appeared in the second quarter of the century. In it the anticlassical forms of the Tetrarch style were replaced by classical models, which were, however, still handled according to the tenets of the abstract style. It is this style that Balty finds illustrated in the Shahba sea goddess mosaic.

Balty refers to this stylistic phenomenon as the "beau style" of the Constantinian renaissance; Levi calls it the Constantinian "fine style." While authors agree that this style emerged in the latter part of Constantine's reign, they disagree about its final development.¹⁹ Since there is recent evidence that the key example of this style in Antioch, the mosaics of Room One of the Constantinian Villa, cannot be earlier than the reign of Constantius II, A.D. 337–61,²⁰ the terminating date for the fine style in Antioch should be extended to at least A.D. 360.

Levi, in describing the *Seasons* mosaic of Room One of the Constantinian Villa, noted that the highlights, ostensibly employed to model forms, were distributed rhythmically throughout the composition to create a glittering decorative surface. He found a comparable employment of highlights in the mosaics of Santa Costanza in Rome, ca. A.D. 337–51.²¹ The Dumbarton Oaks panel may be related to both these monuments because, as

¹⁸ Ibid., 7–8, 68.

¹⁹ For varying interpretations of the history of the style see: Levi, I, 560 ff; Andreas Rumpf, *Stilphasen der spätantiken Kunst: Ein Versuch* (Cologne, 1957), 25–26; Balty, *Syrie*, 8; Dorigo, 189 ff; and Ernst Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making* (Cambridge, 1977), 4, 24 ff.

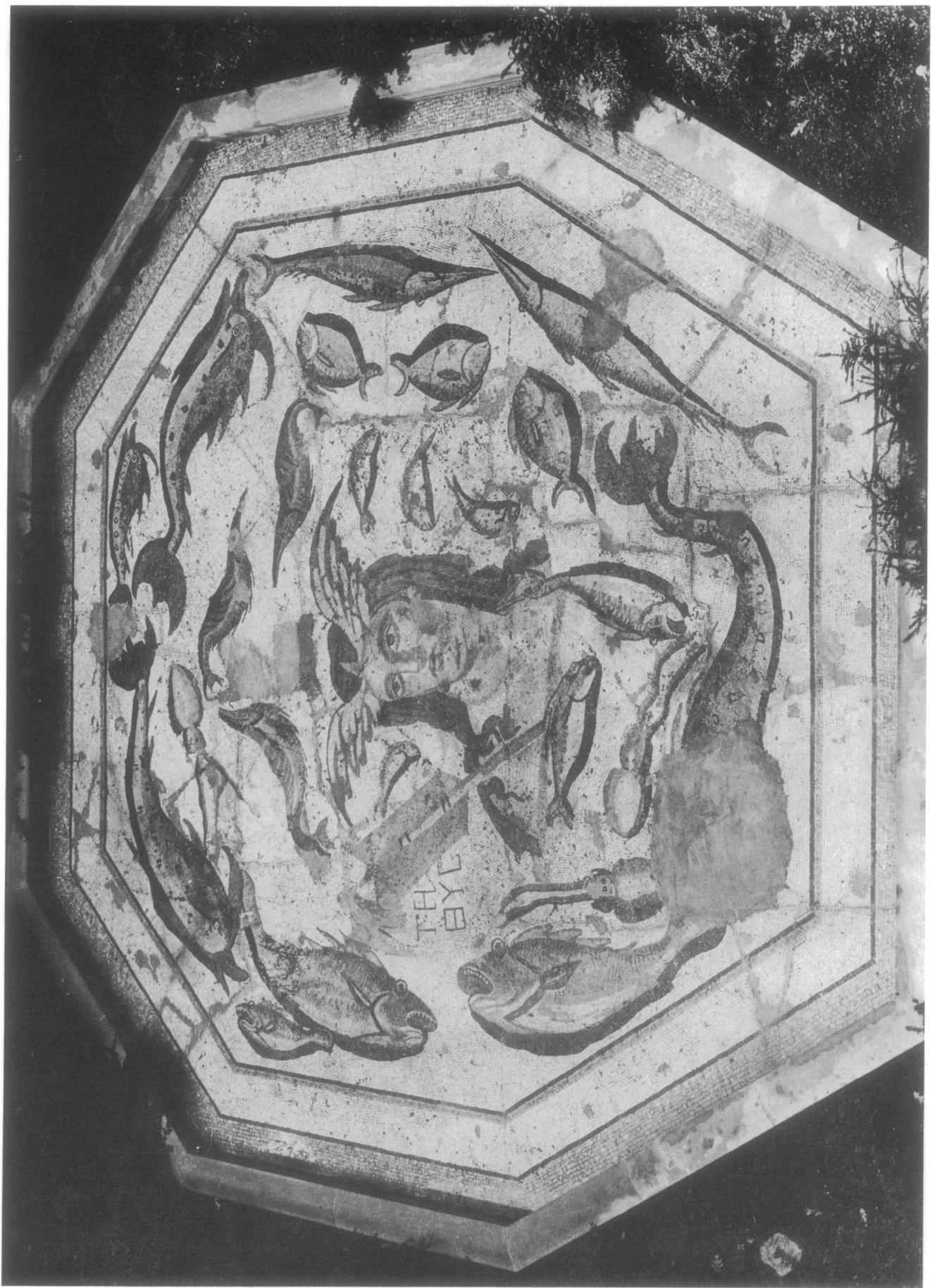
²⁰ Sheila Campbell has recently located in the Antioch archives two coins of Constantius II in an envelope with an entry stating they were found under the mosaic of Room One of 26K DH AE 015, that is, the Constantinian Villa: "Antioch and the Corpus of Mosaics in Southern Turkey," *III Colloquio Internazionale sul Mosaico Antico; Ravenna: 6–10 Settembre 1980* (Ravenna, 1983), 143–48.

²¹ Levi, I, 561. The date for the Santa Costanza mosaics is the one employed in *Age of Spirituality*, ed. Kurt Weitzmann (New York, 1979), 121.

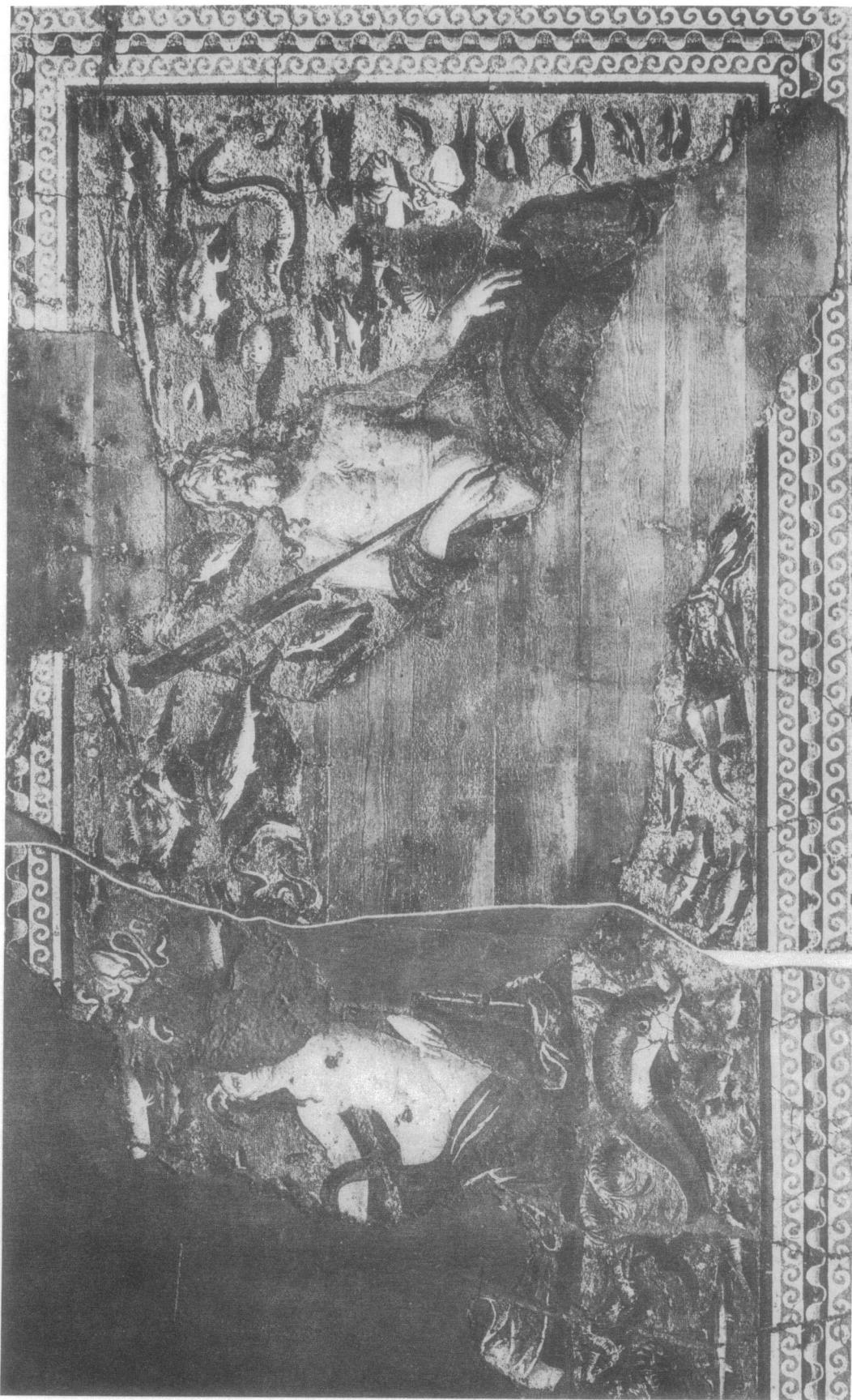
¹⁵ Cf. Levi, I, 325.

¹⁶ See Appendix below.

¹⁷ I owe this observation to Professor Marie Spiro. See also Balty, *Syrie*, 68.



1. Dumbarton Oaks, *Tethys*, from the building under Bath F, Antioch (photo: Dumbarton Oaks)



2. Antioch, House of the Calendar, *Tethys and Okeanos*
(photo: Princeton University, Department of Art and Archaeology)



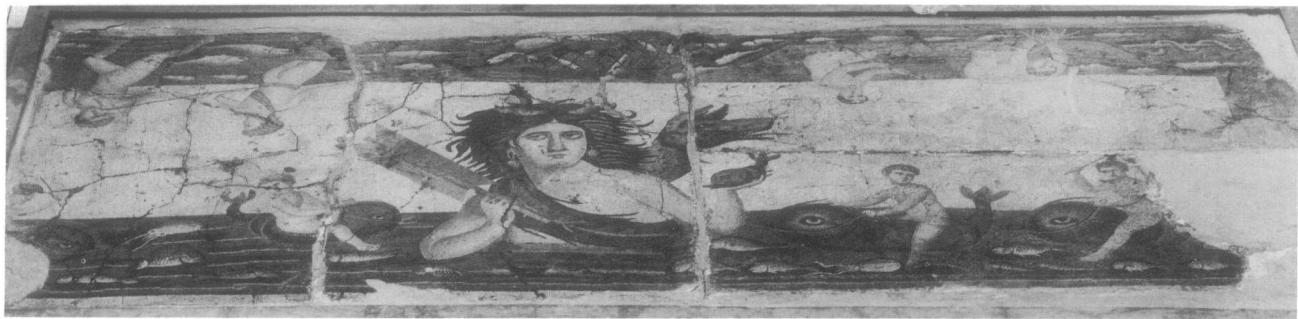
3. Baltimore Museum of Art, *Tethys*, from Room Six, House of the Boat of Psyches, Antioch
(photo: Baltimore Museum of Art, Antioch Project Fund, BMA 1937.118)



4. Detail of Fig. 3, head of Tethys (photo: Baltimore Museum of Art, Antioch Project Fund, BMA 1937.118)



5. Dumbarton Oaks, *Tethys*, detail of head (photo: Dumbarton Oaks)



6. Antioch, Yakte complex, *Thalassa* (photo: Professor Dr. Ludwig Budde)



7. Museum of Shahba-Philippopolis, *Tethys*
(photo: Jean Charles Balty, Centre Belge de Recherches Archéologiques à Apamée de Syrie)



8. Antioch, House of Menander, Room Seventeen, detail of heads of Tethys and Okeanos
(photo: Princeton University, Department of Art and Archaeology)

discussed above, it reflects the same desire for a glittering surface, although in the Dumbarton Oaks pavement it is expressed by the calculated distribution of glass tesserae rather than by the white highlights used in the Constantinian Villa and Santa Costanza. The use of the glass tesserae in the Dumbarton Oaks mosaic probably reflects its function as the pavement of a pool.

There is, however, a more important reason why the Dumbarton Oaks mosaic can be considered an example of the Constantinian fine style. The regular, classical features of the Dumbarton Oaks Tethys reflect a decision to return to a classical model such as the head of the goddess of the House of the Calendar and that of the Baltimore goddess from Room Six of the House of the Boat of Psyches. This classical type had not been in vogue for the heads of the sea goddesses in the mosaics of the second half of the third century and the early fourth. The change in model is seen first in the head of a sea goddess in a mid-third-century mosaic found in the triclinium of the House of the Boat of Psyches and at the same level as the Baltimore goddess of Room Six. Although the head is half destroyed, the ragged locks of hair and the suggestion of a rounded jaw indicate that this was the type used as a model for the sea goddesses of Anazarva and the House of Menander in Antioch (Fig. 8), both dated to the second half of the third century.²² In these fully preserved heads the features are awkward and heavy, the cheeks are rounded without any suggestion of an indentation under the cheekbone, and the hair is represented in irregular and unkempt tufts. In the later Dumbarton Oaks head, in contrast, the even features conform more closely to the classical ideal, the line of the cheek is indented and tapers toward the chin, and the hair falls in long, flowing waves. Thus in reviving an earlier model for the head of the sea goddess the Dumbarton Oaks Tethys exemplifies the return to classical forms characteristic of the Constantinian fine style.

To summarize, in its style the Dumbarton Oaks mosaic retains certain features of classical naturalism: the expression of human sentiment in Tethys' eyes and her pensive pose, the solid plasticity of her form, the casual manner in which the fish are arranged, and their suggestion of movement. On the other hand, the Dumbarton Oaks mosaic reflects the tendency toward abstraction in the linear technique of modeling and in the unnatural representation of light and shade. Furthermore, the

components of the design—the fish and the bust of Tethys—are arranged to create a decorative composition rather than an illusionistic imitation of reality. This combination of features places the Dumbarton Oaks mosaic between the two poles of Late Antique art. In conjunction with these other features, the element of a revived classicism relates the mosaic specifically to the Constantinian fine style. Since the dates of the prime example of the fine style in Antioch, the mosaic of Room One of the Constantinian Villa, should be adjusted to reflect the fact that it could have been laid as late as A.D. 361, or even later, Levi's date of the second quarter of the fourth century for the Dumbarton Oaks mosaic should also be adjusted: A.D. 325–60 may be taken as a working date.

The Dumbarton Oaks mosaic occupies the same intermediate position in the iconographic evolution of the winged sea goddess mosaics as it does in their stylistic development. Of the entire group only two have identifying inscriptions, and of these the Dumbarton Oaks mosaic's inscription "Tethys" is the principal one for elucidating the iconography of these pavements.

The sea goddess Tethys occupied a high position in the hierarchy of the Greek gods. According to the early Greek poets she and her brother Okeanos belonged to the first generation of the gods. From their union came all the waters and the continents of the earth. In later Greek and Latin literature, however, she was referred to as the personification of the sea.²³

The iconographic development of the winged sea goddess group of mosaics can be divided into three phases. I propose that in the first phase the winged sea goddess represented Tethys primarily in her mythological role as consort of Okeanos, joint ruler of the waters of the earth. To this phase belong the second-century pavement from the House of the Calendar (Fig. 2) and its third-century derivatives.²⁴ In the House of the Calendar mosaic the reclining god can be identified as Okeanos, for he has the wild, white hair and beard, as well as the crown of crustacean's claws, which are the standard attributes of this deity. In addition, he holds a rudder, the implement used to govern the waters. From the goddess' forehead sprout wings, like those of Tethys in the Dumbarton Oaks pavement. Although the head has been destroyed, the serpen-

²² RE 5A (Stuttgart, 1934), cols. 1065 ff. The basic reference is to Hesiod, *Theogony*, 187, 337 ff.

²⁴ These include both mosaics from the House of the Boat of Psyches as well as those from Myriandos and the House of Menander.

tine body of some sea monster is preserved, entwined around the goddess' raised arm. I suggest that the goddess in this mosaic is Tethys because, like the goddess in the later Dumbarton Oaks mosaic, she is represented in a marine environment and has wings. The scene in the House of the Calendar, then, would represent the rulers and progenitors of the waters in their domain. Support for this conclusion is provided by the later mosaic from the triclinium of the House of the Boat of Psyches dated to the third quarter of the third century. There the two deities appear in a panel adjacent to the scene of the *Rape of Europa*, who was one of the daughters of Okeanos and Tethys.²⁵

It should also be noted that in the mosaic of the triclinium of the House of the Boat of Psyches the head of the serpentine monster has been preserved. The combination of the dragon head and the snake body identify the creature as a *ketus*, a sea monster of Greek myth. Since he appears in most of the winged sea goddess mosaics, although not in the Dumbarton Oaks panel, it may safely be assumed that he is a secondary attribute of the goddess.

The second phase of the iconographic evolution of the winged sea goddess mosaics began at the end of the third century and lasted until late in the fifth century. I propose that in this phase the identity of the goddess Tethys began to merge with that of the figure employed to personify the sea, for which the word in Greek is *thalassa*.

This development is heralded by an inscription in a mosaic in the late third-century bath at Garni, in eastern Armenia.²⁶ In the central square of this pavement survive the head of a god, crowned with claws and identified by an inscription in Greek as "Okeanos," and the head of a woman, identified as "Thalas(s)a," the personification of the sea. The couple is surrounded in the wide green border by their subjects: fish, nereids, and other denizens of the deep. Although difficult to read because of their abstraction, the protuberances growing from Thalassa's head probably are wings. If they are wings, then their presence in a picture of a marine goddess identified as Thalassa suggests that they were attributes of the personification of the sea as well as of the goddess Tethys.

This, in fact, does not seem to be the case in the third century when the personification of the sea, Thalassa, began to be used more frequently on coins

²⁵RE 5A, col. 1065. See *Antioch*, II, pl. 35.

²⁶See Appendix below.

of Asia Minor and Thrace. Although there are no identifying inscriptions, the identity of the figure is established by the context. For instance, in coins of Perinthos, Pergamon, and Laodicea there can be no doubt that Thalassa is represented by the woman who is paired at the feet of a ruler with Ge (Earth) with her cornucopia.²⁷ On these and other coins, Thalassa is given one or more attributes from a limited repertory: a crown of crustacean's claws, a rudder, a dolphin, a ship, or a ship's prow—but not wings. The attributes that occur most often are the claws and the rudder.

Since there are mistakes in the spelling of the Greek inscriptions in the Garni mosaic, its attribution of wings to the goddess may also be a mistake. However, the presence of the wings adorning Thalassa at Garni may perhaps be explained by a change in the attitude toward Tethys around the end of the third century. New importance may have been given at that time to her role as the personification of the sea.

The unusual iconography of a contemporary Antioch pavement provides the best evidence to support this hypothesis. The courtyard pavement from the House of Oceanus and Thetis is a reversed version of the basic House of the Calendar composition with the reclining, full-length figures of a god and goddess.²⁸ There are, however, significant innovations in the representation of the two deities. Tethys raises her right hand to support a dolphin in her palm, a pose given to Thalassa on Roman sarcophagi.²⁹ Furthermore, Okeanos, with his rudder leaning against his right shoulder, rests his right elbow on an overturned vase from which water flows. The overturned vase is the customary attribute of a river god. Its appearance in this Antioch mosaic was possibly inspired by a composition like that on a third-century coin of Gordion III of Deultum, a Roman port on the Black Sea

²⁷These coins are described in W. H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* 4 (Leipzig, 1909–15), cols. 445–46. In the different format used in a series of coins from the Black Sea port of Amisos in the Pontos from the first and second centuries after Christ, a woman's head with crustacean's claws appears beneath the feet of the enthroned *tyche* of the city. Here the *tyche* holds the rudder, signifying that she governs the sea. F. Imhoof-Blumer, "Zur Münzkunde des Pontus, von Paphlagonien, Tenedos, Aiolis und Lesbos," ZN 20, 257–59, pl. 9, no. 6.

²⁸See Appendix below.

²⁹Roscher, *Lexikon* 4, col. 444, fig. 1, which illustrates the figure of Thalassa on a third-century Prometheus sarcophagus, Naples, Museo Nazionale 6705. For this sarcophagus see Carl Robert, *Die Antiken Sarkophag-Reliefs im Auftrage des Deutschen Archaeologischen Instituts*, III, pt. 3 (Berlin, 1919), 447–49, fig. 357' (a photograph); pl. 118: fig. 357 (a drawing).

coast of Thrace.³⁰ On the coin the overturned vase of the reclining river god, who holds his normal attribute of reeds, pours its waters on another reclining figure, a woman with the attributes of a rudder, a sailing ship, and a dolphin. While the scene on the coin is a clear metaphor for the waters of a river pouring into the sea, the Antioch mosaic is a mixed metaphor in which the significance of the god is unclear and the meaning of the goddess is expanded so that she symbolizes both Tethys and Thalassa.

The influence of the iconography of Thalassa is present, though to a lesser extent, in a group of five mosaics, dating from the third century through the second quarter of the fourth, which share certain iconographic features. These mosaics are the Dumbarton Oaks panel, the mosaic at Anazarva in Cilicia, two mosaics at Shahba in Syria, and the one found at Venosa in Magna Graecia.³¹ In all of these Okeanos is omitted and the bust of the wing-crowned marine goddess is depicted alone, permitting her, therefore, to be interpreted as both the personification of the sea and as the goddess of Greek myth. In addition, she now invariably holds a rudder, the attribute frequently associated with Thalassa as well as with Okeanos.

The Dumbarton Oaks pavement differs in two respects from the other pavements of this iconographic group in the absence of the *ketos* and the presence of the inscription identifying the marine goddess as Tethys. Possibly the omission of the *ketos* may reflect the influence of the iconography of Thalassa, for a *ketos* was not one of her customary attributes.³²

The last mosaic which should be considered in the second phase of the iconographic development of the sea goddess mosaics is the one from Alexandretta, now listed as number four in the Antioch Museum.³³ In this pavement Tethys appears as a full-length figure reclining on a rock. All of her attributes are present: the wings, the rudder, and the *ketos*. Although there is a great stylistic difference, I suggest that this Alexandretta mosaic is from

³⁰ Αρχ. Ἐφ. (1889), pl. 2, no. 25; Roscher, *Lexikon 4*, col. 445.

³¹ See Appendix below.

³² The panel of a bust of a woman wearing a crown of wings from House 2 in DH 35-U probably should be placed in this second phase because of its date. Unlike the earlier single bust of a goddess accompanied by a *ketos* from Room Six of the House of the Boat of Psyches, this goddess has no *ketos*. However, neither does she bear a rudder, as do the single goddesses of the second phase. Even her fish are separated from her and placed in a nearby panel. See the Appendix below for the references for this panel.

³³ See Appendix below.

the same period as the Yakto marine goddess (Fig. 6) of the second quarter of the fifth century because here, too, the goddess, erotes, and fish are integrated with a continuous environment, a band of colored sea, which, however, is unnaturally bent to follow the sides of the panel so that it functions as a framing device.³⁴

The Yakto mosaic (Fig. 6)³⁵ ushers in the third and final phase in the evolution of the Tethys composition. In this phase the iconography of Tethys is completely merged with that of Thalassa. The Yakto goddess has the wavy dark hair, parted in the middle, and the *ketos* entwined around her body from the images of Tethys in the first phase, the rudder acquired by Tethys in the second phase, and now not only Thalassa's attribute of the dolphin resting on her palm, but her crown of crustacean's claws as well. Indeed, because the Yakto goddess no longer wears a crown of wings, the distinguishing attribute of Tethys, she should be identified as Thalassa.³⁶

Thus I propose that as the *Tethys* mosaic composition evolved, the identity of the goddess changed from Tethys in the first phase to Tethys/Thalassa in the second and to Thalassa in the final phase.³⁷ The Dumbarton Oaks composition belongs to the transitional second phase in which the distinct identity of the ancient goddess of Greek myth blurs and expands to merge with that of the personification of the sea, Thalassa. Although the wing-crowned goddess of the Dumbarton Oaks mosaic is clearly identified by inscription as Tethys, in fact she is represented without her consort Okeanos, with whom Tethys was usually associated in Greek religious myth. Furthermore, one of Tethys' distinguishing attributes, the *ketos*, is also omitted but she is given a new attribute, the rudder, an attribute associated with Thalassa, as well as with Okeanos

³⁴ Additional support for a late date for this Alexandretta mosaic is provided by the remarkably similar image of Thalassa (crowned with claws) seated beneath the coral in the Vienna *Dioscorides*, dated to the first decade of the sixth century: *Dioscorides: Codex Vindobonensis Med. Gr. 1, Der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*, ed. Hans Gerstinger, facsimile ed. (Graz, 1970), I, 2, 6; II, fol. 391^v. The poses of both full-length figures are so close that they probably are variants of a common model. In both images the goddess sits upright with right arm extended and bent left arm supporting the rudder against her shoulder.

³⁵ See Appendix below.

³⁶ The woman in the mosaic from the House of the Sea Goddess (see Appendix) is accompanied by a *ketos*, but because the head is missing there is no way of knowing whether she had wings or claws. Therefore she cannot be identified as either Tethys or Thalassa.

³⁷ On the transformation of Tethys into Thalassa see Balty, *Syrie*, 68.

and other marine deities. In brief, she represents here not only Tethys, as the spouse of the god Okeanos in Greek religion, but Tethys as the personification of the sea.

Neither the inscriptions nor the attributes given the sea goddess in this group of mosaics support Doro Levi's identification of the goddess as Thetis.³⁸ In Greek mythology Thetis was a sea divinity of lesser importance than Tethys, for Thetis was one of the nereids who were Tethys' granddaughters.³⁹ She was famed as the bride of the mortal Peleus and the mother of Achilles. While some Latin poets confused Thetis with Tethys,⁴⁰ there is evidence that in the same area and at the same time that the *Tethys* mosaics were executed Thetis' different and distinct identity was understood. She appears, identified by inscriptions, in a second-century panel adjacent to one depicting Achilles in the House of the Porticoes in Antioch,⁴¹ in the border of the third-century Garni mosaic,⁴² where she is associated with other marine subjects of Okeanos and Thalassa; and in a fourth-century pavement in Apamea, Syria, depicting the *Judgment of the Nereids*.⁴³ In none of these mosaics is she given

³⁸ With the exception of the headless marine goddess in the mosaic from the House of the Sea Goddess, Levi consistently refers to all the sea goddesses in the Antioch mosaics as "Thetis." His statement in regard to the inscription on the Dumbarton Oaks mosaic from Bath F is as follows: "The mosaic of the octagonal pool represents the bust of Thetis, identified by the inscription Τηθύς placed on the left side . . ." Levi, I, 258.

³⁹ RE 6A, cols. 206 ff.

⁴⁰ Cf. RE 5A, col. 1066; Charles Daremberg and Edmond Saglio, *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines* 5 (Paris, 1877), 158; Budde, *Mosaiken*, II, 221 note 22.

⁴¹ *Antioch*, III, 212 no. 175B, pl. 85; Levi, I, 110–15; II, pls. 18 f; Jones, 19 no. M–157B. Now at Michigan State University, Lansing.

⁴² Vostchinina, "Mosaïques," 319–21, figs. 6–8.

⁴³ J. Ch. Balty, "Nouvelles mosaïques du 4e siècle sous la cathédrale de l'est," *Apamée de Syrie: Bilan des recherches archéologiques 1969–71. Actes du colloque tenu à Bruxelles les 15, 17 et 18 avril 1972* (Brussels, 1972), 174–82, pls. 65.2, 66.1.

a crown of wings or any other consistently recurring attribute.⁴⁴

In conclusion, then, not only is the Dumbarton Oaks *Tethys* mosaic important because it is a beautiful, well-executed work of art, but because its inscription provides the key to the identity of a unique image, a sea goddess crowned with wings, who figures in a substantial number of mosaics of the Greek East. Although the sea goddess in the mosaic of Garni, Armenia, bears the inscription "Thalassa," the Dumbarton Oaks inscription should be given more weight as identifying evidence because it was found at Antioch, in whose environs most of the winged sea goddess mosaics were found.

In both style and iconography the Dumbarton Oaks *Tethys* pavement illustrates the transitional character of Late Antique art, for it represents an intermediate phase between the naturalism of the classical tradition and the abstract Byzantine style of the sixth century. It reflects that moment when irregular, complex, natural forms were being simplified into geometrical formulas. This was also the moment when the religious significance of the old gods was declining, while their usefulness as personifications was growing. It was the moment when Tethys blended with Thalassa before she submerged in the image of the Sea.

⁴⁴ The absence of attributes supports James Russell's tentative identification of the bust of a woman surrounded by fish in the third-century Anemurium mosaic as "Thetis": "Recent Excavations at Roman Anemurium: 1969–73," *The Proceedings of the Xth International Congress of Classical Archaeology*, Ankara-Izmir, 1973 (Ankara, 1978), II, 918–20; III, pl. 294, fig. 6. Also well illustrated in idem, "Anemurium: The Changing Face of a City," *Archaeology* 33 (1980), 35. Balty, "Proche-Orient," 409, however, interprets this image as one of Tethys. It may best be understood as a hybrid, for the woman bears a general resemblance to the third-century classical Tethys of Baltimore; she is accompanied by a dolphin but not a *keto*, and her hair resembles the twisted waves of the hair of Thetis at Apamea, referred to in note 43 above.

APPENDIX

While other mosaics with representations of this type of marine goddess will probably be discovered, those reported thus far are listed below. Unless otherwise indicated, the buildings are located in Antioch or its suburbs and the dates are those given by the authors cited.

Levi's method of dating requires a brief explanation. Because archeological evidence was virtually nonexistent for most of the Antioch mosaics, Levi constructed a chronology primarily on the basis of their internal stylistic evolution, supported by whatever archeological evidence existed as well as by comparisons with other monuments of Roman art. In part one of *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* the mosaics are described in sequence according to his chronology (see Levi's brief comment, I, 11). A summary list with key dates appears in the Chronology, I, 625, Appendix 1. To obtain a working date for any mosaic one must determine its place in relation to the key dates in the chronological list.

- soon after A.D. 115 House of the Calendar: triclinium overlooking a pool. [*Antioch*, II, 191 no. 71 B, pl. 51; Levi, I, 38–39, fig. 12; II, pl. 6.]
 Archeological data support this date shortly after the earthquake of A.D. 115. [Levi, I, 36.]
- 193–235 Alexandretta: Baths at Myriandos? [Paul Jacquot, *Antioche: Centre de tourisme* (Antioch, 1931), pp. II–III, pl. opposite p. 64. M. F. Anthoine lists on p. II, among the mosaics excavated at the probable site of ancient Myriandos on a hill near Alexandretta, “Thermes contenant Océanos et Thétis, 9 m 90 × 6 m 40. . . .” Presumably the plates illustrating the god and goddess, opposite pp. 64 and IV, respectively, are from this mosaic. Their present location is unknown. The Severan date for the mosaic has been assigned by Janine Balty, “La mosaïque antique au Proche-Orient. I: Des origines à la Tétrarchie,” *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, XII. 2 (Berlin, 1981), 408 note 393.]
- 250–275 House of the Boat of Psyches: Room Six. [*Antioch*, II, 185 no. 51, pl. 39; Levi, I, 186; II, pls. 39b, 157b; Jones, 16 no. M–50 A.]
 Triclinium. [*Antioch*, II, 183 no. 46 B, pl. 33; Levi, I, 167–69; II, pls. 35a, 157a; Jones, 17 no. M–51 B–F.]
 Levi locates the mosaics of the House of the Boat of Psyches at the beginning of the period from 235 to 312. However, elsewhere (I, 2) he implies a date shortly before A.D. 276. Balty, “Proche-Orient,” 392, dates these mosaics to the second half of the third century. Both of these mosaics are now on view in the Baltimore Museum of Art.
- 250–300 House of Menander, upper level: Room 17, a courtyard. The mosaic was adjacent to the nymphaeum on the west side of the courtyard. [*Antioch*, III, 191 no. 138, pl. 66; Levi, I, 214–15, fig. 26; II, pl. 159b.]
 Levi locates the mosaics of the House of Menander in the first half of the period 235–312, after the House of the Boat of Psyches. Balty, loc. cit., places these mosaics in the second half of the third century.
 Anazarva, Turkey (ancient Anazarbus): room for bathing. [Ludwig Budde, *Antike Mosaiken in Kilikien. II: Die heidnischen Mosaiken* (Recklinghausen, 1972), 84–86, pls. 82–87.]
- 250–300 Shahba, Syria (ancient Philippopolis): near the baths. [J. Mascle, *Le Djebel Druze* (Beirut, 1936), 99, pl. opposite p. 95, identified and described in Balty, “Proche-Orient,” 410.]
 Now in the museum in Soueida, Syria.
- late third century Garni, Armenia: bath. [A. Vostchinina, “Mosaïques gréco-romaines trouvées en Union Soviétique,” *La mosaïque gréco-romaine* (Paris, 1965), 319–21, figs. 6–8.]
- ca. 300 House 2 in DH 35–U. [*Antioch*, III, 203 no. 161, pl. 77; Levi, I, 222; II, pl. 50a; Jones, 22 no. M–161 A.]
 Levi dates this mosaic toward the end of the 235–312 period. Now in the Memorial Art Gallery, University of Rochester, New York.
- ca. 300 House of Oceanus and Thetis: a courtyard. [*Antioch*, III, 207 no. 165, pl. 79; Levi, I, 222–23; II, pl. 50b–c; Jones, 18 no. M–155 A–B.]
 In Levi’s chronology the House of Oceanus and Thetis follows immediately after the mosaics from House 2 in DH 35–U. Now in the Denver Art Museum.
- 300–350 Venosa, Italy (ancient Venusia): baths. [Emanuela Fabbricotti, “Una Tethys Venosina,” *AttiMGr*, n.s. 15–17 (1974–76), 207–18, pls. 92–100.] Although this abstract image, preserved only in unclear photographs, is difficult to decipher, the object projecting above the goddess’ left ear does resemble a wing. See *ibid.*, pl. 95.

- 325–360 Building under Bath F. [See note 2 above.]
My reasons for this date are discussed above, p. 123. Now at Dumbarton Oaks.
- 325–350 Shahba, Syria (ancient Philippopolis). [Janine Balty, *Mosaïques antiques de Syrie* (Brussels, 1977), 66–69.]
Preserved in situ in the Shahba-Philippopolis Museum, Shahba, Syria.
- 450–475 Yakto complex. [*Antioch*, II, 137–39, 204, pl. 80; Levi, I, 323–26; II, pls. 75, 76a; Budde, *Mosaiken*, II, pl. 215.]
Internal evidence is the basis for the date of the Yakto sea goddess pavement, for it is contiguous to the *Megalopsychia* mosaic, whose topographical border includes a building inscribed with the name of Ardaburius. Ardaburius was *magister militum per orientem* from A.D. 450 to 457 with headquarters in Antioch. [Levi, I, 279.]
- 450–475 Alexandretta. [Balty, "Proche-Orient," 408 note 393; Budde, *Mosaiken*, II, pls. 220–21.]
Balty, loc. cit., considers this mosaic to be from the same period as the panels from Anazarva and House 2, DH 35–U in Antioch. My reasons for a later dating are given above, p. 125. Now No. 4, Antakya Museum.
- 475–500 House of the Sea-Goddess: corridor in front of a pool. [*Antioch*, III, 208 no. 166 B, pl. 80; Levi, I, 349–50; II, 82c; Jones, 18 no. M–154 B.] Now at the Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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